

Licensed Capacity of Early Learning Programs

DEFINITION

Licensed capacity of early learning programs is the number of child care and early learning programs and slots licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families for children under age six. Licensed centers include child care programs, preschools, nursery schools, and center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

SIGNIFICANCE

High-quality child care and early learning programs for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers can have long-lasting positive effects on how children learn and develop.¹

Early and ongoing enrollment in child care and early learning programs is common in the United States. Across the U.S., 42% of infants under the age of one and 73% of preschoolers between ages three and five regularly participate in a non-parental early care and education arrangement. Participation in early care and education varies by family income, with 63% of children ages birth to five living in households with incomes above poverty enrolled in child care or early learning programs, compared with 49% of those below poverty. Enrollment in center-based programs increases as children get older, with 28% of infants under age one participating in a center-based program while 78% of preschoolers

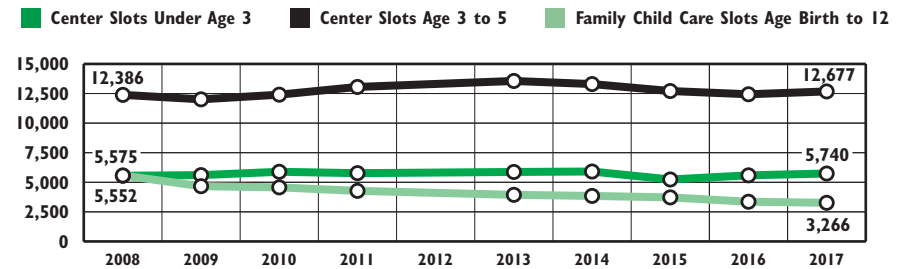
(children ages three to five) are enrolled in a center. Children with disabilities can have difficulty accessing child care and early learning programs despite a federal law requiring that community-based child care and preschool settings include children with disabilities.²

Access to stable, affordable, quality child care is a basic need for many working families and is critical for Rhode Island's economy. When parents have difficulty finding and keeping child care, they are more likely to be absent from work and to leave their jobs.³ Between 2011 and 2015, 73% of Rhode Island children under age six had all parents in the workforce, higher than the U.S. rate of 65%.⁴

The availability of high-quality child care and early learning programs depends on the stability of a skilled teaching workforce. However, there are systemic workforce challenges including high turnover and low compensation levels that do not reward education or training of staff. Early care and education teachers are among the lowest-paid U.S. workers, with almost half relying on public income supports to make ends meet (e.g., the Earned Income Tax Credit, Medicaid, TANF, and SNAP).⁵

The availability of well-designed and maintained buildings that meet the needs of young children is also essential to the supply of quality early learning programs.⁶

Early Learning Program Capacity, Rhode Island, 2008-2017



Source: Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, slots in licensed child care centers and family child care homes, 2008-2015. Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, number of licensed child care center slots and number of licensed family child care homes and slots, from RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), 2016-2017. Starting with the 2013 Factbook, data are collected as of January, instead of December.

- ◆ In January 2017, there were 153 more slots for infants and toddlers (children under age three) and 240 more slots for preschoolers (children ages three to five) in licensed centers than in 2016.⁷
- ◆ In January 2017, there were 91 fewer slots in licensed family child care homes than in the previous year. The number of family child care slots is down 41% since 2008.⁸
- ◆ The majority of licensed child care programs in Rhode Island accept children participating in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Seventy-two percent of licensed centers and 83% of licensed family child care homes accept CCAP certificates, which cover all or part of the cost of child care for low-income working families.⁹
- ◆ In addition to licensed programs operated by community-based agencies, businesses, and family child care providers, there are 52 traditional public schools in Rhode Island, 1 public charter school (Highlander), and 1 state-operated school (The RI School for the Deaf) that have preschool classrooms.¹⁰

Quality Child Care for Infants and Toddlers

- ◆ Infants and toddlers benefit from low child-to-provider ratios and small group sizes where they can form nurturing, responsive, and continuous relationships with adults.¹¹

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Table 34.

Capacity of Licensed Early Learning Programs, Rhode Island, January 2017

CITY/TOWN	# OF LICENSED CENTERS	# OF CENTER SLOTS FOR CHILDREN <AGE 3	# OF CENTER SLOTS FOR CHILDREN AGES 3-5	# OF LICENSED FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES	# OF LICENSED FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME SLOTS*	TOTAL LICENSED EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM SLOTS
Barrington	8	130	306	4	26	462
Bristol	5	59	113	4	26	198
Burrillville	3	19	87	2	14	120
Central Falls	4	96	202	17	109	407
Charlestown	5	14	110	2	14	138
Coventry	7	179	201	5	35	415
Cranston	31	471	1,126	48	324	1,921
Cumberland	7	112	332	9	67	511
East Greenwich	12	344	670	0	0	1,014
East Providence	16	156	520	5	34	710
Exeter	2	34	38	1	8	80
Foster	1	19	18	0	0	37
Glocester	3	55	82	1	11	148
Hopkinton	3	12	60	1	8	80
Jamestown	1	30	34	1	8	72
Johnston	19	360	448	9	62	870
Lincoln	5	127	228	2	12	367
Little Compton	1	0	20	0	0	20
Middletown	9	144	403	1	6	553
Narragansett	2	12	20	0	0	32
New Shoreham	1	13	26	0	0	39
Newport	4	64	183	2	20	267
North Kingstown	7	107	307	2	11	425
North Providence	11	142	256	12	76	474
North Smithfield	1	77	91	4	36	204
Pawtucket	18	304	823	34	218	1,345
Portsmouth	5	90	114	1	6	210
Providence	50	757	2,048	286	1,871	4,676
Richmond	0	0	0	3	28	28
Scituate	1	11	36	4	30	77
Smithfield	9	303	519	0	0	822
South Kingstown	13	233	425	7	54	712
Tiverton	3	24	113	1	8	145
Warren	5	80	192	0	0	272
Warwick	26	775	1,301	9	66	2,142
West Greenwich	2	6	48	0	0	54
West Warwick	5	169	318	2	14	501
Westerly	7	88	298	2	12	398
Woonsocket	9	124	561	7	52	737
Four Core Cities	81	1,281	3,634	344	2,250	7,165
Remainder of State	240	4,459	9,043	144	1,016	14,518
Rhode Island	321	5,740	12,677	488	3,266	21,683

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, number of licensed child care center slots and programs for children under age six and number of licensed family child care homes and slots, from RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), January 2017. Only full-day and morning slots are counted for center-based care.

Licensed centers include child care programs, preschools, nursery schools, and center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

*Family child care slots are for children ages birth to 12 years old.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

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